(b) if so, the names of the States where they would be launched; and

(c) the names of the companies which would be included in the Rural Business hub alongwith details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir. As part of the efforts to take the benefits of economic reforms to the rural areas of the country and all sections of the society, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has launched the Rural Business Hubs (RBHs) initiative which will connect the rural sector with the corporate sector and thereby widen the market for rural products.

(b) The concept is being implemented in all States and Union Territories of the country.

(c) Rural products which have got wide market potential are being identified by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), State Governments, Central Ministries, NABARD, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Confederation of Indian Industries (CIL) etc., and any company interested to associate with PRIs for setting up RBHs are free to enter into Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with them and set up RBHs. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj facilitates this process.

Rural Business Hubs

2961. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are expecting to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with multinational companies based in India and abroad for the development of rural India by setting up rural business hubs; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposal and stage at which the proposal is at present?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) The Government is not contemplating to sign any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with multinational companies based in India and abroad for the development of rural India by setting up Rural Business Hubs (RBHs).

The Union Government, with the help of State Governments, Panchayats, the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and other similar organisations is implementing the concept of RBH to connect rural producers and rural

products to national and international markets with the help of business houses. Panchayati Raj Instituions are being facilitated to enter into Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with appropriate business partners.

Under the Rural Business Hubs initiative, the Union Government has facilitated signing of about 50 MoUs between private companies (which include Indian as will as multinational companies based in India and abroad), and Panchayati Raj Institutions. These MoUs pertain to different streams of activities including distribution of power by Panchayats, plantation of Jatropha, fruit processing seed production, organics food, dairying, brick making, electricity generation through bio-mass, handicrafts and handloom.

Central funds for panchayat schemes

†2962. SHRI MAHENDRA SAHNI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the scheme under which the Central Government directly allocates the funds to Gram Panchayats, annually;

(b) the names of such schemes in Bihar where funds have been allocated; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) The Central Government does not directly allocate any funds to Gram Panchayats. Funds are, however, allocated to Panchayati Raj Institutions under the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and Central Finance Commission grants through the Consolidated Fund of State. Bihar has been allocated an amount of Rs. 1624 crore as grants recommended by the Twelfth Finance Commission for the Panchayati Raj Institutions during the period 2005—2010 out of which an amount of Rs. 324.80 crore has been released during 2005-06. Under the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), an amount Rs. 124.67 crore has been released as Central allocation during 2006-07 along with an allocation of 126479 tonnes of foodgrains (Rice).

Task Force's Recommendations on Panchayati Raj

2963. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Task Force on Panchayati Raj set up in the year 2005 has submitted its report;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.